



Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
801 North First Street, Room 400
San José, California 95110-1795

Hearing Date/Agenda Number:
P.C. – 2/9/04 Item: 3.d.1. & 3.d.2.

File Number:
GP03-07-11/GPT03-07-11

Council District and SNI Area:
7 – N/A

Major Thoroughfares Map Number:
100

Assessor's Parcel Number(s):
455-59-001, 002, 003, 010, 011;
455-63-004, 006

Project Manager: David Tymn

GENERAL PLAN REPORT

2004 WINTER HEARING

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Amend the Communications Hill Specific Plan and Communications Hill Planned Community as follows: 1) Allow a reduction to the 24 DU/AC minimum density on certain blocks to a minimum 17 DU/AC provided that the average density within the project area is within the 24-40 DU/AC range; and 2) Allow reductions to the required 30-foot minimum front-to-front building separation distance for multi-family housing.

TEXT REFERENCE:

Chapter 3.2.b – Communications Hill Specific Plan; Land Use; Multi-Family Housing; Design Standards and Building and Unit Separations.

Chapter V – Land Use/Transportation Diagram; Planned Residential Community/Planned Community; Communications Hill Planned Community, page 177, Paragraph 7: Specific Land Use Plan.

LOCATION: North side of Hillsdale Avenue, opposite the terminus of Vista Park Drive (Communications Hill Planned Community).

ACREAGE: 7.3

APPLICANT/OWNER:

HMH Engineers /KB Home

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS:

Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Communications Hill Specific Plan Resolution No. 63624; Certified April 7, 1992.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt the proposed Text Amendment.

Approved by:

Date:

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

CITY COUNCIL ACTION:

CITY DEPARTMENT AND PUBLIC AGENCY COMMENTS RECEIVED:

- Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) – The VTA encourages the City of San Jose to maintain or increase residential densities established for Communications Hill.
- Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) – The ALUC has no comments on the proposed General Plan Amendment.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE:

None received.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a privately initiated amendment to the Communications Hill Specific Plan (CHSP) text to allow for exceptions to the minimum density of 24 dwelling units per acre on Blocks 1, 3, 4 and 7 as specified within the Communications Hill Specific Plan. The area, known as Lands of Vierra, is located on the north side of Hillsdale Avenue, opposite the terminus of Vista Park Drive, and is bounded by Donnici, Larciano, Batista and Altino Streets (see Figure 1).

The property would retain the Multi-Family Residential (24-40 DU/AC) Communications Specific Plan land use designation. The applicant has stated that due to their desire to build a combination of single-family detached homes and a higher density podium residential project, they would not be able to meet the minimum density per block set by the Specific Plan. They, therefore, request an amendment to the text of the Specific Plan to allow for reduced density within the specified blocks.

In addition, the applicant has requested a separate text amendment to allow a reduction in the minimum front-to-front building separations for the property described above. Currently the minimum separation allowed by CHSP is 30 feet. The proposal is that separations meet either the 30-foot minimum or the applicable City of San Jose Residential Design Guidelines standards, which allow separations down to 25 feet depending on housing type, and other criteria.

BACKGROUND

In 1992, the Communications Hill Specific Plan was adopted to create a significant new urban neighborhood on Communications Hill. The Communications Hill Specific Plan area is generally bounded by Curtner Avenue to the north, Hillsdale Avenue to the south, Highway 87 to the west and Monterey Highway the east.

At the same time, the City Council amended the *San Jose 2020 General Plan* to add the Communications Hill Planned Community in order to incorporate the major features of the Specific Plan directly into the General Plan. A specific plan is a long-range set of policies for land use and development in a defined area. The specific plan process has enabled the City of San Jose, in coordination with representatives of the Communications Hill Specific Plan Task Force and property owners, to identify the desired vision and character for the area. The Plan

also addresses allowed uses and incorporates development criteria at a level of detail beyond the scope of the General Plan.

As mentioned above, the applicant has a desire to build single-family homes as well as a higher density podium residential project and therefore would not be able to meet the minimum density per block set by the Specific Plan. The applicant has worked with staff to determine the particular blocks that may be considered on a case-by-case basis for a reduction to the minimum density per block (see Figure 1). While a reduction to the minimum density required under the Specific Plan may be allowed upon the approval of this amendment request (i.e., no lower than 17 DU/AC), the overall intent is not to jeopardize the vision for Communications Hill of a primarily multi-family residential, urban neighborhood.

Existing and Surrounding Land Uses

This portion of the Specific Plan area is undeveloped. Other properties near the site are either under construction or have been developed with high density housing as specified by the Communications Hill Specific Plan.

ANALYSIS

Policy Consistency

Conformance to the San Jose 2020 General Plan

The proposed text amendment is consistent with the San José 2020 General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation of Communications Hill Planned Community (CHPC). The objective of the CHPC is to provide a comprehensive planning framework for development of a very high-density residential, pedestrian-oriented, urban community with a mix of uses on and around Communications Hill. The proposed amendment allows flexibility in density on certain blocks, while maintaining the minimum overall densities specified by the Plan.

Conformance to the Communications Hill Specific Plan

The Communications Hill Specific Plan (CHSP) was specifically designed to provide a mix of housing types to create diverse neighborhoods and enable people of differing incomes to live within the new neighborhoods. The CHSP permits up to 4,000 residential units and requires a density of at least 24 units per net developable acre on each block. The Specific Plan states that lower or higher densities may be permitted on individual sites within a block provided that the block average remains at a minimum of 24 units per acre and a maximum of 40 units per acre. The proposed amendment differs from the existing CHSP text in that this would allow a lower density (17 DU/AC) on certain blocks provided that the Planned Development zoning project area meets the average density of 24-40 DU/AC. The pending Planned Development rezoning would retain the existing overall density of 29.2 DU/AC, as approved in the original zoning.

The proposed text amendment would be consistent with the goals of the CHSP to provide product and density diversity. The subject site has been specifically planned for multi-family development. Aside from a potential reduction to the 24 unit per acre minimum density per block, the overall density of the larger project would be required to meet the existing minimum density requirement. The proposed text amendment conforms to all other aspects of the CHSP.

Land Use Compatibility

The issue of adjacent land use compatibility is addressed in the Communications Hill Specific Plan and Communications Hill Planned Community, which specifically designate this property as Multi-Family Residential (24-40 DU/AC). The Plan envisions a mix of housing types to create an architecturally diverse neighborhood. Typical housing types include townhouses with tuck-under parking, stacked walk-up flats, small podium apartment houses, and mid-rise apartment buildings. The proposed text amendment would not result in a change to the overall intent of the land use designation.

The subject amendment would allow for lower densities than the minimum on certain blocks, down to 17 dwelling units to the acre. However, the overall density within the Planned Development Zoning project area would be required to continue to meet the 24-40 DU/AC range. This would ensure that the desired housing types developed in the larger project area remain consistent with the vision of the Communications Hill Specific Plan.

Planning staff is currently reviewing a proposed conforming Planned Development Rezoning that has been filed for this site. The proposed zoning is consistent with the proposed Specific Plan text amendment. Staff has discussed with the applicant that staff's recommended conditions in the Planned Development Rezoning will require that the higher density units are constructed prior to the lower density units. The project site is currently undeveloped and the proposed rezoning proposes an overall density of 29.2 DU/AC on the larger project area when completed. Staff is anticipating the rezoning to be heard at City Council with the General Plan Amendment on March 16, 2004.

Building Separations

The applicant has also requested a text amendment to allow a reduction in the minimum front-to-front building separation distance. Currently the minimum allowed separation is 30 feet. Rather than requiring a specific minimum dimension, the request is that separations should meet the Residential Design Guidelines for the property bounded by Donnici, Larciano, Batista and Altino Streets. The Residential Design Guidelines include criteria to address this type of building separation issue and would allow a front to front building minimum separation of 25 feet depending on the circumstances. Building separations accommodate private open space, pedestrian paseos, walkways, streets, retaining walls, etc. They help define the character and "feel" of a street. The Residential Design Guidelines is an effective tool in this analysis. Staff is supportive of this change because it is consistent with design flexibility allowed in similar projects throughout the City and will not compromise the overall vision for the Communications Hill Specific Plan.

Environmental Review

The subject text amendment is consistent with the findings of the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Communications Hill Specific Plan, resolution no. 63624, certified on April 7, 1992.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The property owners and occupants within a 1,000-foot radius were sent a newsletter regarding the two community meetings that were held on January 14 and 15, 2004. They also received a notice of the public hearings to be held on the subject amendment before the Planning Commission on February 9 and City Council on March 16. In addition, the Department's web site contains information regarding the General Plan process, amendments, staff reports, and hearing schedule. This site is available to any member of the public and contains the most current information regarding the status of the amendments. Staff has received no phone calls or written correspondence.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff recommends approval of the proposed text amendment.

Attachments

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Proposed Text Amendment to the Communications Hill Specific Plan

Amend Chapter 3.2.b – Communications Hill Specific Plan; Land Use; Multi-Family Housing; Design Standards as follows:

1. Pg. 58, Paragraph 2: Design Standards

Density

The Horizon 2000 General Plan states that multi-family housing on Communications Hill should range in density between 25 to 40 units per acre. The Specific Plan permits up to 4000 units for all residential development and requires a density of at least 24 units per net developable acre on each block. Lower or higher densities may be permitted on individual sites within a block provided that the block average remains at a minimum of 24 units per acre and a maximum of 40 units per acre. Due to topographic/geologic constraints, limited exceptions for the few blocks generally bounded by streets “2”, “K”, “4” and “M” may be given consideration to develop at a density below the required minimum 24 dwelling unit per acre (i.e., no lower than 17 DU/AC). Such exceptions to the minimum density requirement shall be within the context of a single Planned Development rezoning application for “Dairy Hill”. Development on the remaining blocks for the “Dairy Hill” site should be developed at the higher end of the 24-40 dwelling unit per acre range in order to achieve the intent of the Multi-Family Residential designation. Limited exceptions may be given for the few blocks generally referred to as “Lands of Vierra”, generally bounded by Donnici, Larciano, Batista and Altino Streets to allow development at a density below the required minimum 24 dwelling unit per acre (i.e., no lower than 17 DU/AC). Such exceptions to the minimum density requirement shall be within the context of a single Planned Development rezoning application. Development on the remaining blocks within the Planned Development Zoning should occur at the higher end of the 24-40 dwelling unit per acre range or may exceed the 40 dwelling unit per acre maximum in order to achieve the intent of the Multi-Family Residential designation.

2. Pg. 61, Paragraph 1: Building and Unit Separations

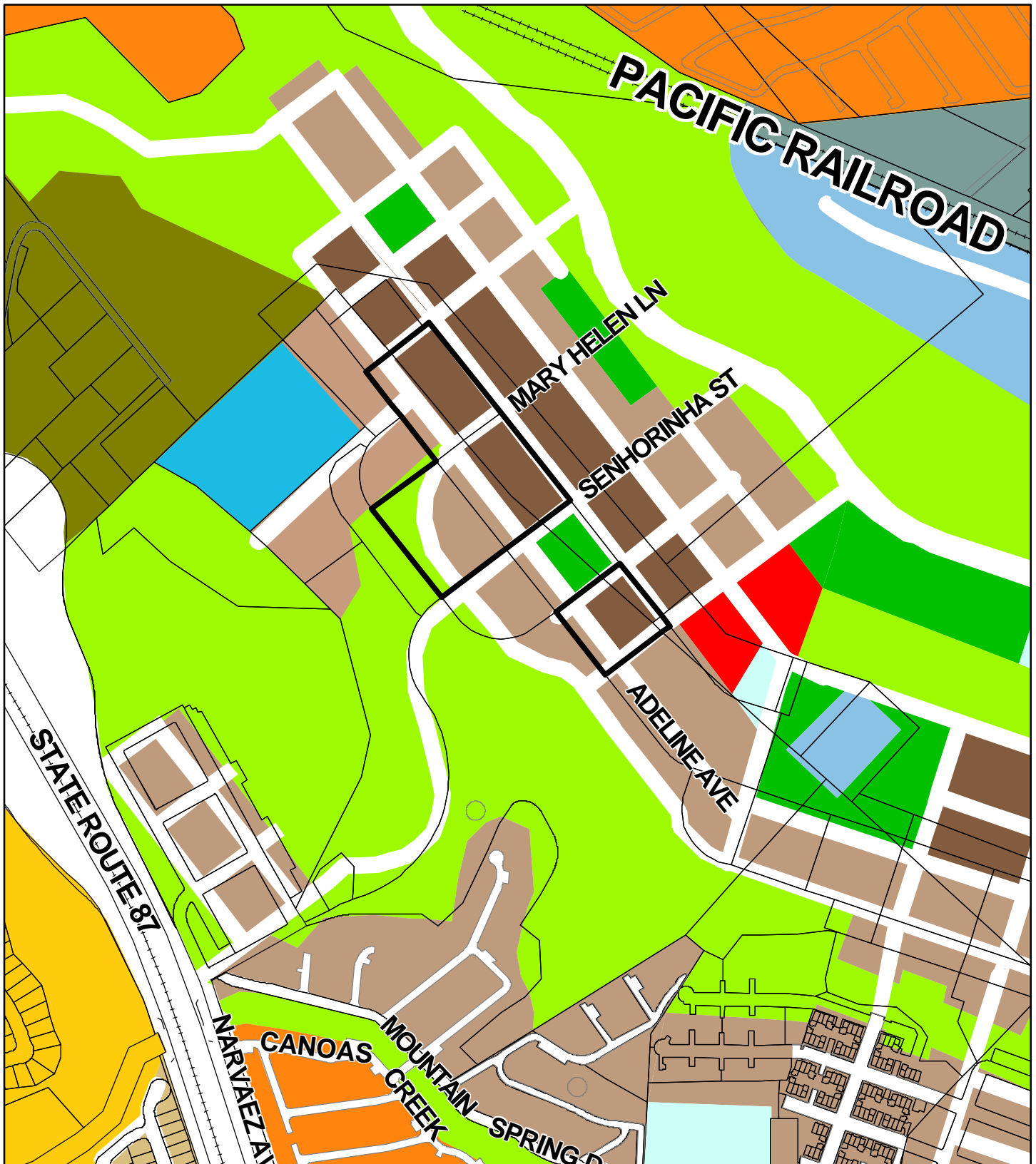
The minimum separations between residential building faces are as follows: 1) front to front – 30 feet or, (for the few blocks generally referred to as “Lands of Vierra”, generally bounded by Donnici, Larciano, Batista and Altino Streets) as defined in the City of San Jose Residential Design Guidelines; 2) front to rear – 25 feet; 3) front to side – 20 feet; 4) rear to rear – 25 feet and; 5) rear to side – 15 feet. There is no requirement for side to side separations.

Proposed Text Amendment to the San Jose 2020 General Plan

Amend Chapter V – Land Use/ Transportation Diagram; Planned Residential Community/
Planned Community; Communications Hill Planned Community as follows:

3. Pg. 177, Paragraph 7: Specific Land Use Plan

The Communications Hill Planned Community permits up to 4,000 dwelling units and requires a minimum density of 24 dwelling units per acre on each of the multi-family blocks. Limited exceptions may be given to allow specific blocks to develop at a density below the required minimum 24 dwelling unit per acre (i.e., no lower than 17 DU/AC). While the maximum density for most of this area is 40 units per acre, there are blocks along the ridge and “tall building” sites which can be developed at densities over 40 units per acre provided that there is excess capacity available from sites developing at densities under 40 units per acre. Ten single-family lots are also included in the Planned Community.



Department of Planning, Building
and Code Enforcement
Planning Services Division



SITE



Scale 1" = 500'
Quad: 84

